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PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN RELATIONS,(U)
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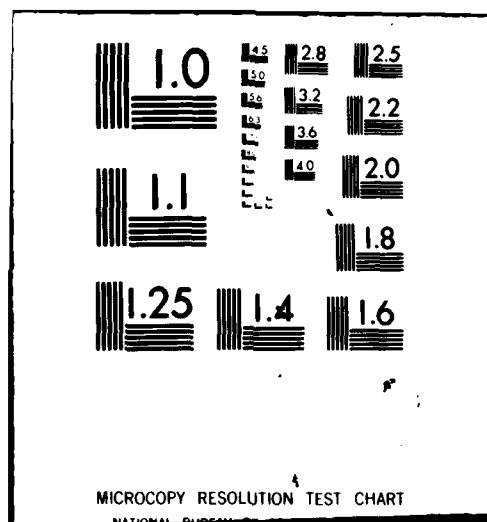
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Pakistan's Foreign Relations,

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The "Islamic connection" and relations with the People's Republic of China are the two constants of Pakistan's foreign policy. Historically, common perceptions of threat have been instrumental in bringing nations together, and so it is with the PRC and Pakistan which, since the 1960s, have shared their fear of India and the Soviet Union. The Indo-Soviet treaty of 1971 institutionalized the links between the two signatories and left little doubt in Islamabad and Beijing that parallel interests had brought Moscow and New Delhi into a treaty relationship.

Remarkably, despite Chinese inability to help Pakistan militarily in the 1971 war with India and the constraints placed on the PRC by the Sino-Soviet dispute, China is considered to be an honorable and steadfast friend by Pakistan. General Zia's comment that "the Chinese do not give us much aid, but their word is as good as gold with us" reflects the strength of the relationship.

Relations with the Islamic bloc have significance far beyond the simple dollar amount of the aid given by several key Muslim countries to Pakistan. While the aid has been generous, it has been sporadic. Yet, the turning towards the Maghreb has

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brought Pakistan tremendous psychological relief, offering it a way out of the impasse of the ever present squabbles of South Asia. By making itself part and parcel of Southwest Asia, Pakistan has found for itself a measure of protection against a variety of threats, for example, from the USSR, India, Afghanistan or a combination thereof. Moreover, by associating itself with the Gulf, Pakistan is able to assume a more dynamic role than would otherwise be the case for a nation that has been truncated by a powerful neighbor. In addition, the Gulf serves as a market for Pakistani labor whose annual remittances exceed \$2 billion, offsetting the desperate shortage of foreign exchange.

The backbone of Pakistan's relations with the Gulf is its relationship with Saudi Arabia. This is true not only because Saudi Arabia is the protector of the Islamic Faith but also because the vast oil resources of Saudi Arabia offer it a special role in its relations with the United States. The philosophy espoused by the conservative Saudis is compatible with that of the present-day Pakistani leadership. Saudi entree to the United States arsenal offers a limited but much coveted access to Pakistan. The U.S. commitment to Saudi Arabia is secure. Pakistani ties to Saudi Arabia indirectly involve the U.S. and stretch American concern with Southwest Asian security to the East.

In recent months, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, aware of their shared insecurity, have been moving to create a sense of security by working towards a military relationship. Their

mutuality of need is enhanced by what they offer each other: Saudi money for Pakistan's military modernization; Pakistani manpower to augment the desperately weak Saudi forces. Washington remains in the background of this relationship as both actors are sensitive to charges (from domestic as well as regional parties) of open collaboration with the U.S. The feeling in Riyadh as well as Islamabad towards Washington can be summed up in the phrase: "the U.S. should go away a little closer!"

Nonalignment is taken seriously by Pakistan. After years of exclusion from this council because of India, Pakistan is loath to abandon its fledgling relationship. It is sensitive to charges of open alliance with the United States and counters with the argument that the relationship with the U.S. falls far short of the Indo-Soviet treaty.

Security cooperation with the U.S. offers a new dimension to Pakistani foreign policy. While Washington welcomes a more active Pakistani military role in Saudi Arabia, it has not succeeded so far in openly drawing Pakistan into supporting a U.S. strategic consensus in the Gulf. However, today, far more than in previous years, U.S. and Pakistani perceptions of a threat mesh.

Soviet occupation of Afghanistan is very real for Pakistan and the presence of over 2 million Afghan refugees within Pakistani borders is a constant reminder of the upheavals across

the border which could easily spill across the Durand line. General Zia's oft-repeated comment that "the battle for Pakistan will be fought in Afghanistan" is indicative of the close tie between Pakistani and Afghan security. While India is still perceived by Pakistan as constituting a potential threat, that threat is no longer seen as occurring outside Indo-Soviet collaboration. Yet, Pakistan is hesitant in burning its bridges to the Soviet Union because of the Soviet presence on Pakistan's border and the inability of the Pakistanis to match and meet any Soviet threat alone.

The U.S. and Pakistan agreed in June 1981 to a five-year, \$3 billion military and economic aid package. The American offer was indicative of the seriousness with which the Reagan Administration approaches its relationship with Pakistan. Pakistani rejection of the Carter offer of \$400 million was based on Islamabad's perception that the commitment was lacking in quality, not just quantity. However, even today, the Pakistanis are reticent because the recent history of U.S.-Pakistani relations is a troubled one, and they view genuine U.S. problems of timing and delivery as carrying the potential for the U.S. to back away from its commitments. Confidence-building is sorely needed on both sides; and perhaps when the new agreement is implemented on schedule, some of the doubts will disappear.

Strong reaction in Moscow and New Delhi to U.S. aid to Pakistan makes Islamabad nervous because it has perceived past

U.S. aid to be tied to concern with India (which carries the potential of leading the U.S. to reassess its program in Pakistan). In addition, were the U.S. commitment to Pakistan to be abandoned for internal (U.S.) reasons, Pakistan would be "left in the lurch once again," to quote a senior Pakistani official.

A number of problems could still arise in U.S. relations with Pakistan. The nuclear proliferation issue has not been abandoned, it has simply been side-stepped. The proclivities of the Reagan Administration may not be matched on Capitol Hill where concern for sanctions against states seeking to nuclearize is strong. The Pakistanis have made it clear they will not be talked into giving up their nuclear option. An impasse may result, particularly since approval of the \$3 billion package is a piecemeal affair.

U.S. demands on Pakistan to proceed more actively and cooperatively on Southwest Asian defense could also run into trouble. The Rapid Deployment Force is in need of home port facilities or even periodic access to area ports. Because of regional sensitivity to an open American presence, particularly against "The Great Satan", Pakistanis will be extremely reluctant to agree. They compare their inability to actively assist the U.S. with U.S. difficulty in offering Pakistan a full-fledged security guarantee duly ratified by Congress. Of course, peacetime and wartime scenarios may differ, depending not only on capabilities but also on perceptions of outcome.

Pakistan's foreign policy is thus characterized by a number of complementary strands which collectively seek to enhance Islamabad's position. Given its isolation at India's hands in 1971, Pakistan has considerably multiplied its options in the past decade. Whether this trend continues may not be entirely up to the Pakistanis alone.

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